

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ROME 12627 041706Z

46

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00 CIAE-00

PM-04 INR-07 L-03 ACDA-07 NSAE-00 PA-01 SS-15 PRS-01

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9248

INFO USMISSION NATO IMMEDIATE

USIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

USDOCOSOUTH NAPLES IMMEDIATE

SETAF IMMEDIATE

AMCONSUL MILAN IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 12627

USDOCOSOUTH FOR INTAFF, PASS ADM TURNER

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, NATO, IT

SUBJ: ALLEGED LINKS BETWEEN NATO AND CHEMICAL PLANT IN
NORTHERN ITALY

REF: (A) USNATO 4163, (B) ROME 11966

1. AUGUST EIGHT EDITION OF ITALY'S SECOND MOST WIDELY READ
POLITICAL WEEKLY L'ESPRESSO (STRONG LEFTIST SYMPATHIES)
CARRIES LENGTHY STORY ALLEGING LINKS BETWEEN NATO AND ICMESA,
CHEMICAL PLANT IN NORTHERN ITALY WHERE EXPLOSION IN MID-JULY
CAUSED RELEASE INTO ATMOSPHERE AND DISPERSION THROUGHOUT
IMMEDIATE ZONE OF TETRACHLORODIBENZOPARADIOXINE GAS
(DIOXINE). ARTICLE BY ENRICO FINZI BASED ON STATEMENT BY
UNNAMED WITNESS WHO IS REPRESENTED TO BE A MANAGER OF SWISS
MULTINATIONAL FOFFMAN LA ROCHE, HOLDING COMPANY TO WHICH
ICMESA BELONGS. STATEMENT AND OTHER SUPPORTING "EVIDENCE"
ALLEGES THAT ICMESA WAS PRODUCING CHLOROPHENOL FOR NATO
TROOPS BASED IN GERMANY AND RECENTLY HAD BEGUN PRODUCTION
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PAGE 02 ROME 12627 041706Z

OF EVEN MORE DEADLY GAS WITH INITIALS SP 121.

2. STORY CLAIMS THAT DIOXINE WAS BEING PRODUCED AS BASE FOR HERBICIDES AND DEFOLIANTS FOR USE BY AMERICAN AND GERMAN TROOPS BASED IN GERMANY IN QUOTE CHEMICAL DEFENSE UNITS UNQUOTE. THESE UNITS WERE SUPPOSEDLY REINFORCED ABOUT MIDDLE LAST YEAR, AT SAME TIME PRODUCTION AT ICMESA WAS INCREASED NOTABLY. STORY SAYS THIS INTERPRETATION SUGGESTED BY CIRCUMSTANTIAL EVIDENCE THAT ICMESA WAS PRODUCING MUCH MORE TCDD (300 GRAMS WEEKLY) THAN WOULD BE ACCOUNTED FOR IF THIS SUBSTANCE WERE MERELY BY-PRODUCT OF ICMESA'S MAIN PRODUCT, TRICLOROPHENOL (USED IN SOAPS AND DEODERANTS). STORY SAYS THERE HAS BEEN NO SATISFACTORY EXPLANATION YET ABOUT WHERE SO LARGE A QUANTIFY OF TCDD WENT.

3. AS MORE DIRECT EVIDENCE, L'ESPRESSO QUOTES THE HOFFMAN-LA ROCHE MANAGER TO EFFECT THAT PART OF ICMESA'S PRODUCTION HAD BEEN TREATED IN FACTORY AS DANGEROUS AND QUOTE SECRET UNQUOTE AND THAT REAL NATURE AND DESTINATION OF THESE PRODUCTS WAS NOT KNOWN TO FACTORY MANAGEMENT. STORY SAYS THAT WHEN EXPLOSION OCCURRED, ICMESA MANAGERS INFORMED HOFFMAN-LA ROCHE MANAGERS IN BERNE WHO, INSTEAD OF IMMEDIATELY CONTACTING ITALIAN AUTHORITIES, FIRST ADVISED NATO OFFICIALS WHO MADE INVESTIGATION OF SITE AND TOOK SMAPLINGS THROUGHOUT NEIGHBORING ZONE BEFORE ITALIAN AUTHORITIES INFORMED. AMERICAN OFFICERS IN CIVILIAN DRESS ARE SAID TO HAVE BEEN DISPATCHED FROM KARLSRUHE AND VICENZA ON JULY 20 TO VISIT ICMESA SITE. ONE OF THESE OFFICERS IS DESCRIBED AS GREEK-AMERICAN BY NAME OF SIOTIS WHO ALLEGEDLY CAME FROM GERMANY TO TAKE SAMPLES WHICH WERE LATER ANALYZED AT THE QUOTE EXTREMELY WELL-EQUIPPED MILITARY LABORATORY AT VICENZA UNQUOTE. STORY ALSO REFERS TO SUBSEQUENT JULY 27 VISIT TO ICMESA OF AMERICANS FROM SETAF AT VICENZA AND ASKS WHY RESULTS OF THEIR TESTS HAVE YET TO BE MADE PUBLIC. FYI. ON JULY 26 TWO OFFICERS FROM SETAF MET WITH PREFECT OF MILAN TO SEE IF MILITARY COULD BE OF ASSISTANCE. IT WAS DECIDED THEY COULD NOT AND THEY DID NOT VISIT SITE (CDR USASETAF 261750Z JUL 76 BEING REPEATED). WE HAVE ALREADY ACKNOWLEDGED ABOVE IN RESPONSE PRESS QUERIES.

4. L'ESPRESSO STORY WAS REPORTED ON RAI'S SOCIALIST-CONTROLLED SECOND CHANNEL YESTERDAY EVENING. TV COMMENTATOR PHRASED CONFIDENTIAL

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PAGE 03 ROME 12627 041706Z

REPORT TO SUGGEST THERE NO QUESTION ABOUT TROUTH L'ESPRESSO'S ALLEGATIONS. SAME CHANNEL ALSO CARRIED INTERVIEW WITH PRESIDENT OF LOMBARDY REGIONAL GOVERNMENT WHO WHEN ASKED ABOUT REPORT REPLIED THAT ALLEGATIONS OF NATO INVOLVEMENT WERE SERIOUS AND NEEDED TO BE INVESTIGATED IMMEDIATELY. PRESS THIS MORNING MENTIONS L'ESPRESSO REPORT WITHOUT HOWEVER GIVING IT PROMINENCE.

5. IN RESPONDING TO PRESS INQUIRIES DURING PAST WEEK

EMBASSY HAS DENIED THAT EITHER US MILITARY OR NATO WAS RECIPIENT OF ANY PRODUCT PRODUCED BY ICMESA.

6. BASED ON PAST PATTERNS AND EMOTIONAL VIETNAM-RELATED ATMOSPHERE SURROUNDING TCDD CONTAMINATION PROBLEM, WE EXPECT L'ESPRESSO ARTICLE TO BE PICKED UP BY DAILY PRESS BEGINNING TOMORROW.

7. ACTION REQUESTED: REQUEST DEPARTMENT INSTRUCT USNATO TO HAVE NON-USNATO SOURCE(LUNS, IF POSSIBLE) DENY NATO ACTIVITIES DESCRIBED PARA 3 ABOVE AND TO AFFIRM THAT GOI REQUESTED NATO ASSISTANCE. STATEMENT SHOULD ALSO DENY THAT CHEMICAL PRODUCED BY ICMESA WAS FOR NATO MILITARY PURPOSES. ALSO REQUEST DEPARTMENT BE PREPARED FOLLOW-UP NATO STATEMENT INCLUDING DENIAL THAT ANY CHEMICALS PRODUCED BY ICMESA WERE SOLD TO U.S. MILITARY. AT SAME TIME AMBASSADOR WILL BE SEEING FONMIN FORLANI, AND POSSIBLY OTHERS, IN EFFORT TO GET GOI TO CLARIFY SITUATION WITH PUBLIC STATEMENT INCLUDING CLEAR AFFIRMATION THAT GOI REQUESTED HELP FROM NATO MEMBER NATIONS(INCLUDING U.S.) AND THAT SEVERAL HAVE RESPONDED. IF NATO WILL NOT RESPOND PROMPTLY, URGE DEPARTMENT TO ISSUE DENIAL OF ANY U.S. INVOLVEMENT WHICH CAN BE REPEATED HERE. VOLPE

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